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Ministry of Forests

LOCAL MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE FOREST RECREATION

VICTORIA – The Ministry of Forests is encouraging groups with innovative and cost-effective ideas for co-managing Forest Service recreation sites and trails to submit their proposals this fall.

"We want to ensure strong, effective management of our forest recreation sites and services," said Forests Minister Michael de Jong. "Community groups are often the most knowledgeable about how to manage local resources in a way that meets local needs. This is an excellent opportunity for local groups to be involved in managing facilities that are important to them."

Since April, nine agreements have been signed for the management of about 70 sites, including an innovative agreement in Clearwater that employs four developmentally disabled adults to maintain 22 recreation sites. Various groups have expressed interest in managing as many as 500 other sites.

The Ministry of Forests has issued requests for proposals for the non-commercial management and maintenance of recreation sites and trails, excluding those currently under management agreements. Proposals must be self-sufficient and require no financial assistance from the ministry.

"Our goal is to keep as many sites and trails open as possible and to maintain this valuable network of recreation sites and trails in a cost-effective manner," said de Jong. "This approach supports government's vision of a British Columbia where tax dollars are focused on critical services and where there are more opportunities for more people."

The ministry announced earlier this year that it would gradually withdraw from the management of over 1,300 Forest Service recreation sites and nearly 500 trails to focus on core stewardship and forest management duties, as well as to support the government's goal to restore sound fiscal management to the province.

After the requests for proposals close during December, the ministry will review the proposals and negotiate agreements to be in place for April 2003. Copies of the requests for proposals can be obtained at local forest district offices. An information package to help potential partners develop their proposals has been posted at the Forest Service recreation Web site at http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/rec/rec.htm.

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Visit the province's Web site at http://www.gov.bc.ca/ for online information and services.

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